

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Announces and Kicks Off First Phase of "Care" Strategy in East New York

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Andrew Kimball, President & CEO, New York City Economic Development Corporation:

It's great to be here with you all this morning on this beautiful day. It may be raining, but the sun is shining on Broadway Junction. My name's Andrew Kimball. I'm CEO of the city's Economic Development Corporation, EDC, and it's really an honor to be here today. Mayor Adams will be here shortly. This has been a project that's been near and dear to his heart, I know because he talked to me about it a long time ago when he was borough president and the need to bring new commercial space to downtown areas that didn't have it. And that is exactly what this project is about today. I'm glad to be joined by our partners in the city, particularly Commissioner Pinnock at DCAS, really our arm in arm partner on this project for so many years and really looking forward to that partnership growing. Also, DSS Commissioner Jenkins, really delighted to be standing here with you today. And of course, our city council member, Sandy Nurse, who you'll hear from in a minute.

Kimball: We also have representatives from the offices of Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, State Senator Salazar, Assembly member Walker and Assembly member Dilan. And we're joined by a number of community partners, Local Development Corporation of East New York and NYC Business Solution Center, Industrial Outreach Center Network, and of course our great partner who you'll hear from in a minute, and the development project, the Lesser Group. We're here because we care about Broadway Junction, we care about equitable development in New York City and we care about seeing this area grow. There's been tremendous residential growth, today is about jobs and opportunities right here on the ground. This administration is focused on rebuilding, renewing, reinventing, and that means every neighborhood and borough in this city, and EDC is really proud to be a partner in that work. We're not just creating jobs, but we're spurring economic development that moves our city forward in its recovery.

Kimball: The site may not look like much now, but it's going to be home to the largest ever commercial building in Broadway Junction. It'll bring new retail, office space, economic activity right here and will deliver new amenities to those who live and work nearby. And what's more exciting is how the city plans to lead the way in a strategy that uses our city agencies to our advantage, our core strategies, city offices revitalizing the economy brings in an anchor tenant to commercial office space to spur economic activity. Now, we all know as New Yorkers, we've got to bring Midtown Manhattan back. But if we're going to grow an equitable city where people have jobs close to where they live, an opportunity, we've got to do that in every commercial core across New York. That's what this mayor is committed to. That's what EDC is committed to. That's what today is about. That's what future announcements in Jamaica, Queens are going to be about, in the South Bronx.

Kimball: And we hope working in partnership with DCAS over the years, many more. Here, we're bringing DSS' Human Resources Administration, the perfect first tenant, which will draw more companies to this space and help revitalize the neighborhood. Over 1,100 employees will eventually be working here from HRA and additional employees in the offices and retail spaces. This means new people spending money in the neighborhood and reigniting the local economy. Further, new commercial development can bring jobs closer to home for people who live here. This building is not one and done. As I said, we're going to take this strategy to every community, every downtown district across the city that has not seen commercial growth in recent decades. The CARE strategy will have a truly meaningful impact towards building a more inclusive economy. We have projects underway both in the Queens and Bronx and we're excited to see those move forward in the near future.

Kimball: I want to extend a special shout again to our colleagues at DCAS who will be not only invaluable in this project, to every project going forward. At NYCEDC, under my watch, this administration is focused on East New York and we have new leadership in place that's going to get the job done. And the first part of that, and I was just talking to the council member, is listening and learning. I'm looking forward to doing a walking tour with you, understanding the community's needs and wants here and how we can partner better together in the future. And now, it's my great pleasure to introduce the Council member Sandy Nurse.

[...]

Kimball: Thank you, Council member, really appreciate that spirit of partnership and we're going to be here. And part of the reason we're going to be here is we have an unbelievable staff at EDC who's truly committed. There are lots of them here, but I just want to specifically thank Lauren Wolf who took a leadership role in this project many years ago and is really driving our strategy around care. So thank you, Lauren. So it's now my pleasure to turn it over to the developer, Abraham Lesser, and his representative, Ross Moskowitz, who's going to speak on behalf of the developer.

[...]

Kimball: Thank you, Ross. 30 years ago, when I was starting my career at the state Urban Development Corporation, I was lucky enough to meet a guy named Bill Wilkins who started to tutor me on what community development was, what industrial development was. I took that, became part of the roadmap for me when I went to the Navy yard and other places. So it's really a great pleasure to see our careers come back together again on this project. Ladies and gentlemen, the Director of the Local Development Corporation of East New York, Bill Wilkins. Thanks.

[...]

Mayor Eric Adams: Oh man. Thanks so much, Bill. And this area, the Junction, means so much to me, District 33, my beginning days as a transit cop, I remember riding through here seeing the L, the J, the A, just watching a community with so much opportunity just being ignored.

Mayor Adams: And I too, like Andrew, when I had the opportunity to meet Bill, he was just a visionary. And I was the borough president at the time. We walked through the area, we saw the possibilities. And it was right there. And I think nothing is more applicable than what he stated that this is a field of dreams.

Mayor Adams: But as we build it, they will come, but they coming cannot be displacement. There are far too many people who have been here for so long and really wanted to have an opportunity to watch the growth of this community. My auntie lives on 22 Pillar Street. I remember staying with her during the summertime, taking the train here, walking down the block towards the Chauncey Street Station. And I knew that we had great potential and opportunity here.

Mayor Adams: And so Bill, kudos to you and your entire team for just coming with the vision. And Andrew, materializing that vision. We have so many partnerships together, Andrew, back from the days of the Navy Yard to the days of Sunset Park. And I'm so happy you are at the helm right now, as we move our city in the right direction.

Mayor Adams: And I want to thank the partnership and commitment to building a more equitable city. Our city is coming back. We are going to make sure that as we come back, we are not going to have a setback for those who have had historical inequalities, we're going to come back together. And I am committed to doing that. Promises made, promises kept. We're going to say that over and over again in this administration. Almost 100 days on Sunday. I think we had day 97, Sunday would be 100 days. 100 days in.

Mayor Adams: We have revisited the communities and people who we have met along the way and stated we're going to fulfill the promises I made on the campaign trail. We pointed out our commitment in the blueprint for New York City's economic recovery. And breaking ground on this space here is the continuation of that blueprint. And this is the first project of our CARE strategy. CARE standing for, it's an acronym, for city agencies revitalizing the economy. And we're going to be deploying this approach throughout the entire city. We're going to go to places like the Bronx, Queens and ensure that we utilize government resources to uplift entire communities.

Mayor Adams: And it's not just an office building. It's so much more than that. It is the city staff, people who come to the location, all of the employees, they're going into the local restaurants, the local bodegas, the local stores, and they're helping boost the entire economy.

Mayor Adams: And you can look at this location, Broadway Junction is a transit center, and it has been underutilized for so long. It allows New Yorkers to come to a central location. If it means taking the A train, the J train, the L train and the multiple number of buses, and it's a safe place. Right after Broadway Junction is District 33, which is the transit district. And it plays the level of safety that we need. It has been underserved for far too long. Today, we change that.

Mayor Adams: We start not only to put a shovel in the ground, but we start the opportunities of investing in a community that has been long overlooked. We're kick

starting the economic growth in this area right here in Brooklyn. City government is leading the way.

Mayor Adams: How many jobs? A thousand jobs. A thousand jobs with a thousand opportunities to really feed into the economic growth of the city.

Mayor Adams: Oh, this may be the president, and I don't want to miss it. The days of cell phones, lose your life.

[...]

Mayor Adams: The thousand people will be buying coffee, buying sodas, buying vegan sandwiches, and all other healthy things they have in their community. So there's some great possibilities here. And we're shifting the city space closer to communities so they can have access to the communities and services that they need right in their neighborhood. Giving New Yorkers greater access to city resources, agencies and people. And making cost efficiency by moving our offices from expensive spaces in Manhattan and other locations, so that we can bring in businesses which we are going to attract to our city to have those more costly spaces by making the best out of taxpayer dollars.

Mayor Adams: And so a few weeks ago, when I outlined my blueprint for economic recovery, I spoke of going back to the way things were before. But we are not going back where we're ignoring those who are impacted greatly by the pandemic. We're building a more inclusive economy that works for all New Yorkers. This is about re-imagining our communities and giving the hope and opportunity by doing so. We know, and clearly you know, New York is the economic engine of the nation. The way it goes in New York, goes America. If we get it right here, America will get it right. And I want us to set the standard across the entire country and show the rest of the country how you do inclusive development. And so I'm excited about this project. I'm excited about putting the shovel in the ground and returning to the commitment that I made to this community and the leaders of the community.

Mayor Adams: We can do this in partnership as we finally reach towards East New York, South Bronx, South Jamaica, Queens, Rockaways, all of these communities that have watched the buildings go up, but their hopes and opportunities were going down. We're moving in the right direction and thank everyone who's a part of this initiative. All

of you who are sitting here, this is your victory as much as it is the victory of this administration. Thank you very much. Thank you, Bill.

Question: Given the continued presence of remote work and lots of office space that's still empty, people haven't come back, does growing commercial space still necessarily translate to new jobs today?

Mayor Adams: You said growing office-

Question: Does expanding commercial space still translate to jobs, given remote work?

Mayor Adams: Well, this space that we're building here, we going to move city agencies here. DSS, they're going to relocate here. So that translates into jobs. People are coming here to this community. Not only are we going to allow those city employees to spend money here, but those city employees also are going to give the accessibility to those who need the services. If you were to do a GIS mapping, many of the people in this community, they are looking for the services that are now going to be local. That's a huge change from having people go downtown. We're going to have the services where people need them.

Question: Mayor Adams and Mr. Wilkins, can you detail more how you'll stop the displacement of Black and brown New Yorkers? You were very specific that that's priority of yours.

Mayor Adams: Well, number one, by having our local businesses. Our local businesses are going to be here. We're going to continue to make sure that we develop here in housing. We're going to partner with the council person, the assembly person, the state senator in this area, to hear their plan about how we're going to do affordable housing in this area. And we're going to go after those who harass tenants and displace them.

Mayor Adams: We had a case yesterday that I received a call the day before yesterday at 1:00, 2:00 AM in the morning, where a landlord illegally evicted a tenant. Our police department is going to go seek out that landlord and take the necessary actions. So we must protect tenants where they are, make sure they have access to fair proceedings in

court and make sure we build at an affordable rate, and we are going to need the partners of our local electives to do that.

Question: Mayor, do you anticipate that the 1,100 people that you're moving, most of whom are going to Downtown Brooklyn offices right now, will be excited about transit out to East New York or do you anticipate you might get some pushback on it?

Mayor Adams: Are they going to be excited? Who doesn't want to come to East New York? Everybody love East New York. They're going to be excited to do so. And what's interesting, many of them live in East New York. Many of them live in areas where they're commuting two hours to get to their place of employment. So when we talk about live/work communities, we're not only talking about affluent communities. We need to have that live/work community throughout the entire city. And so I love coming to East New York. I think everybody would love that.

Question: You mentioned 1,000 jobs that are going to be created from this. Just a point of clarification, are you saying that 1,000 new jobs are going to be created or it's just office jobs at other city agencies that are now going to come here? On that same point, if it is new jobs, is there any guard rails in place to make sure that those jobs go to workers in the actual local community?

Mayor Adams: Want to answer that, Andrew?

Kimball: Yeah, the exciting thing about this program, again, not just here, but we'll be rolling it out in other communities is that the city agency provides the anchor tenancy, which provides the economics for a building to go up. In each one of those buildings, there'll be a significant amount of additional space. In this project, it's about 80,000 square feet of space that will go to other tenancies. So the council member talked about how she was looking for affordable space in the neighborhood. Could be here if it was up and open. Could be for other local small businesses.

Kimball: Part of the key undertakings that EDC will have here is working with the folks on the ground, like Bill Wilkins, to make sure that local businesses know of the opportunity and have access to it going forward. So there'll be 1,000 jobs coming here from the city agency. Some of those folks already live locally. Some don't. They'll be coming from other communities. But then there'll be other businesses here that will

create hundreds of additional jobs on top of that. We hope many of those locally as well. And again, we'll be working with our partners on the ground.

Question: Can you run through the taxpayer subsidies that are involved in this proposal?

Kimball: Zero.

Question: Before you arrived, council member Nurse had some fairly strong words about how the city needs to help avoid speculation, avoid displacement. I wonder if council member Nurse, you can expand on what you'd like to see from the administration and mayor, if you could respond to what you'd like to see.

[...]

Mayor Adams: I agree. Next.

[Crosstalk]

Question: Mayor Adams, I just want to ask you about the program that the prior administration put in place during the pandemic to move Rikers state prison in making [inaudible] being released into hotels. And what happened this either Monday or Friday, you got a letter from a number of Queens elected officials who are concerned about why is this program continuing when prior administration told them that this was going to be a COVID-related program and it no longer is. So can you just address their concerns and tell me, is there an end game here?

Mayor Adams: Yes, there is. First of all, I don't know who thought COVID was over, but it's not. Because you just had on a mask, so it's obvious you know it's still here.

Question: Your contract was before... The prior contract was specifically COVID-related emergency. This contract you are proposing right now is non-COVID.

Mayor Adams: Again, COVID is still here and the team did not want a disruption of services because I think it's interesting that people talk about making sure we protect

those who are in need, who are leaving incarceration, but when we're doing it without a disruption of services, I'm getting a letter saying, "Let's do a disruption of services." We don't want a disruption of services and we're going to make the right decision that those who are coming home from incarceration that I'm going to fight for, that we're going to make sure we don't have a disruption of services. And that is why we are taking action that we're doing, and when there's need to reevaluate new contract, we're going to do that.

Question: Do you support the current plan to build 10 skyscrapers in Manhattan to fund upgrades to Penn Station? And are there any changes your administration is taking to the plan?

Mayor Adams: The plan to?

Question: The plan to upgrade Penn Station and build 10 skyscrapers in the area.

Mayor Adams: We're still evaluating that. I think it's time to do something new in the Penn Station area. We're going to partner with the local elected official. The council members' opinion, it means a lot to me when it comes down to developing in the areas and we're going to speak with them and find out what their vision is, as well as the state lawmakers, the Assembly. It's about a partnership. It's not about just not hearing from those local electeds.

Question: Mayor Adams, like it or not, you're now in the middle of a political rivalry with Florida, with Governor DeSantis. I want you to speak to that broadly, but also, now you're the face and the voice of New York values.

Mayor Adams: Well, first of all, I like rivalries with other states. I have traveled to Florida and I'm trying to steal their companies. I'm going all over the country. And they've been doing it to us for a long time. They've been coming to New York, taking our businesses away. So listen, watch out, Eric is going to their countries. I'm buying my plane tickets. And New York is a place to be. And so specifically with the "Don't Say Gay" he was wrong, period. And it was political posturing. He's aware that in their school system, at that age, they don't do sex education. So why was the bill passed? What was the purpose of that? And so I believe whenever someone attempts to bully someone, that you need to stand up and protect them. That's what I did as a student, as a police officer, as a state senator, as the borough president. Now, as the mayor.

Question: Mayor, you just said you value council member input. Recently, the progressive caucus of the Council, which is a majority of the Council, put out a letter on homeless encampment saying what you're doing is cruel, it's callous, it creates more harm for this population. Given that it's a majority of the Council, how do you plan on working with this Council when it is diametrically opposed to you in this instance?

Mayor Adams: Well, let's be clear here. The partnership is hearing the voices of those. Consult, not consent. We need to be clear on that. Let me tell you what's cruel. Cruel is having people live in cardboard boxes, in tents, human waste, drug paraphernalia, no bathrooms, no showers, no place to put your clothing. That's cruel. And so I want to work with my council members and I would like to see them with me at 2:00 in the morning when I'm on the train stations, talking to people who are homeless. I want to see them at 4:00 AM, when I'm going to encampment sites. It is easy to be in the sterilized environment of this Council chambers and state we should leave the people sleeping on the street. I want partners, let's go out there together. Let's talk people into the shelters. Let's look at the brochures. Come with me at night, when I go to shelters to inspect the conditions of shelters. I want those partners together.

Mayor Adams: I am not going to leave New Yorkers living on the street. That's not happening. It's been too long. We've ignored it. We act like it didn't exist. That is not what my administration is about. We're going to place them in shelters, permanent housing, and we're going to demand. That's why Gary Jenkins is here, who lived in the shelter once. That's why he's here. That's why he's my commissioner. We're going to make sure those shelters are safe, clean, and transition people into permanent housing. There is nothing dignified one day of having someone live on the street. I'm not going to allow that to happen.

[Crosstalk]

Question: My first question is about the now former city attorney who confronted you at your last press conference on Monday. Three questions. Did you know she was a city attorney when she confronted you? What was your reaction to both the interaction you had with her and finding out she was a city attorney? And did you make the call to fire her?

Mayor Adams: Great questions. One, anyone who was there at the press conference, when she spoke, it was clear she was not a reporter, but what did I do? I say, "Allow her

to speak." We started allowing her to speak. I'm not going to be disrespectful and not allow her to speak. She spoke. I didn't know who she was. There's a group that's traveling around the city, banging on the doors of my health commissioner, even though his children are inside, yelling and screaming, threatening his life. There's a group that's running around the city who is the numerical minority, but they are loud, so people believe that they are the majority. Got it. Did not know who she was, did not make the call to fire her. It doesn't bother me when people say names, call names at me. Listen, I'm an ex-cop, people have been calling me names for years. Doesn't bother me. But what she tweeted, sent out, it was inappropriate. And the Law Department made the decision and notified me prior to that press conference of their actions. And any questions, you could find out from the Law Department. I had no interaction with that at all.

Question: And my second question is on a report in thecity.com this morning that you met with Mets owner Steve Cohen in January. I'm wondering if he pitched you on his casino in Willets Point? What you think of the idea of a casino in Willets Point? And whether his donations to your PAC influence your decision to make?

Mayor Adams: None at all. And I don't go into private conversations, but I meet with everybody. I mean, that's my... I met with Hawk Newsome. I met with... I don't understand why people think a man shouldn't meet with everyone. I meet with everyone. I meet with you.

Question: Casino in Citi Field, yes or no?

Mayor Adams: Listen, we're looking at all the proposals. We want the best for New York City. We want the economic development. Whatever happens in New York City, we think this is the best place. And we're examining all the proposals.

Question: Thank you. We reported the other day that Assistant Deputy DOC Warden Wayne Prince has been named as the commanding officer of the Rikers Island Health Management Division, that's the division that oversees the troubled sick leave system on the island. This is in spite of the fact that Mr. Price has himself been under investigation for allegedly violating the sick pay system. Were you aware of this appointment before it was made? And do you appropriate for him to have that role given the allegations?

Mayor Adams: No. Wasn't aware. Two, it's a temporary assignment. They post him to get someone to fill that assignment. And three, listen, I just love Commissioner Molina. Love him. This is the first inning of a nine inning game. And during the inning, there's going to be a lot of things that's happening. But at the end of the game, we're going to win. The guy's the best guy for the job. First Latino to hold a position, sincere. He's there early in the morning, he's committed, he's dedicated. Rikers was a mess. The mess didn't start January 1st. It has been a mess for years. Molina is the right person. And I just have the utmost faith in him. I just love the guy. And he's going to do an amazing job as the commissioner.

Question: Price though, even on a temporary assignment, is it appropriate for him to hold that at all?

Mayor Adams: I think that Commissioner Molina made a decision, temporary. And whatever he decides, support him 100%, because he's going to get it right and he's going to fix Rikers.

Question: There's a poll out today that says 59% of New York families think that their family would be better off if they permanently moved out New York City. [Inaudible] this poll out. What do you make of that, you're 100 days in is coming up this weekend, to hear that 59% percent of the city would rather be somewhere else?

Mayor Adams: This is an Arnold Schwarzenegger moment, they'll be back.